

The Ethical Significance in the Dramas
of
Ibsen, Björnson, and Strindberg.

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Preface

My first vital interest in modern drama resulted from a course of lectures on the Interpretation of Nineteenth Century Prose and Drama, given by Prof. Stockton Axson in the University of Colorado during the summer of 1916.

A limitation of the subject to the three great Scandinavian dramatists has been very profitable in forming a basis for broader study in all literature as well as in the drama. For the preparation of this thesis I have read twenty-one plays by Ibsen, fifteen by Björnson, and twenty by Strindberg, all in translation. In addition to the main line of work I have made a cursory, but helpful, study of modern ethical themes in general. I have found valuable suggestions of ethical themes in Miss Bertha Charlene Tucker's thesis, *Good and Evil as Represented in Massinger's Plays*.

My work under Prof. S.L. Whitcomb has been enjoyable as well as profitable, and I am sincerely grateful to him for the very excellent assistance he has given to me. For the exceedingly kind and helpful interest that Prof. C.G. Dunlap has shown, I am deeply appreciative. I also desire to thank Miss Clara Gilham for the consideration she has shown to me in the Library.

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Chapter I.

Introduction.

The impetus to modern drama came from the three great Scandinavian dramatists---Ibsen, Björnson, and Strindberg. Each was a literary artist impressed with a sincere conviction of his duty to see and to reveal good and evil in society. The presentation of human life, as it existed in Scandinavia in the latter half of the nineteenth century and as it exists in one form or another the world over, is truthful and realistic with no minimizing of morality.

The charge that modern drama is too depressing and morbid finds its principal illustration in Ibsen, whose temperament made it impossible for him to view life in a wholly optimistic light. George Brandes designates him as "a pessimist whose pessimism is of a moral character, akin to contempt and indignation. He does not bemoan; he indicts. His gloomy way of looking at things makes him, in the first place, polemical; for when he directs his gaze towards his own time, it presents to his eye sheer misery and guilt, and shows him the discord between what ought to be and what is. In the second place it makes him bitter; for when he turns his gaze on the ideal he sees its destruction as inevitable, all higher living and

striving as fruitless, and discord between what ought to be and what is, attainable."¹

The known facts about Henrik Ibsen's life are parallel with his poetic nature. In 1843, at the age of fifteen, he was apprenticed to an apothecary in a small seaport town and for seven years lived in wretched circumstances, which made it impossible for him to see the bright side of existence. The people of Grimstad received a gloomy and sinister impression of him as he walked about like a "mystery sealed with seven seals", the natural result of both outward and inward struggle against the hardness and drudgery of life. Ibsen tried various lines of work before he devoted himself entirely to his genius. He attempted journalism but after a year or two left it to become stage-poet for the National Theater in Bergen. The inadequate salary was offset by the valuable experience he received from his connection with the Theater, especially as it gave him opportunity to visit other theaters for the purpose of study. After five years in Bergen he became instructor at the Norwegian Theater in Christiania, which had been established to encourage Norwegian authorship and acting in opposition to the theaters under Danish management and influence. The following year

1. Henrik Ibsen. Björnsterne Björnson. Critical Studies.

Ibsen aroused the contemptuous disapproval of stage managers by producing *The Vikings at Helgeland*, a saga-drama, in which he threw off the influence of Oehlenschläger and other Danish writers. Although his drama marked a new era for Norwegian literature, for several years he was subjected to humiliations and annoyances which, together with the ignorance that he saw in his countrymen and the constant attacks of the press, developed ironic qualities in him.

Ibsen's message, "Dare to be true", was first given to the public in *Love's Comedy*, published in 1862, in which he protested against the conventionality that deadens the poetry of love. The Norwegian people were unprepared for such a violent ridicule of life among the middle classes; Ibsen's position became bitterly disagreeable and he felt that there was no longer anyone outside of his own family who believed in him. While in this mood he wrote *The Pretenders*. William Archer believes that his relation to Björnson at that time lay at the root of his character contrast of Håkon and Skule. The interpretation is at least possible, for Björnson although five years younger than Ibsen was already the "darling of fortune" and endowed with a healthy self-reliance that the older artist lacked. There is no jealousy in the portrayal

but rather an inability to understand why the "right" belongs to the fortunate one.

In 1864, Ibsen left his fatherland and settled in Rome. Two years later he published *Brand*, which marked a turning point in his career and won from Norway a recognition of pride in possessing a man who dared to tell the truth. Henceforth his place as a dramatist was assured and he devoted his energies to diagnosing the diseased conditions of society, best represented in *The Pillars of Society*, *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Wild Duck*, *Rosmersholm*, *The Lady from the Sea*, and *Hedda Gabler*. But Norway was not yet ready to receive his message and he wrote to Dr. George Brandes in 1882: "When I think how slow and heavy and dull the general intelligence is at home, when I notice the low standard by which everything is judged, a deep despondency comes over me, and it often seems to me that I might just as well end my literary activity at once. They really do not need poetry at home; they get along so well with the *Parliamentary News* and the *Lutheran Weekly*. And then they have their party papers. I have not the gifts that go to make a good citizen, nor yet the gift of orthodoxy and what I possess no gift for, I keep out of. Liberty is the first and highest condition for me. At home they do

not trouble much about liberty, but only about liberties, a few more or a few less according to the standpoint of their party. I feel, too, most painfully affected by the crudity, the plebeian element, in all our public discussion. The very praiseworthy attempt to make of our people a democratic community has inadvertently gone a good way towards making us a plebeian community. Distinction of soul seems to be on the decline at home." On his seventieth birthday Ibsen received the highest honors from his own country and from all parts of the world. In 1901, his health began to decline and he died on May 23, 1906, after a severe mental breakdown.

The circumstances under which Björnsterne Björnson lived were more favorable than Ibsen's. He was born in a remote northern village of Norway where life among a wild, turbulent people developed in him a sturdy independence. When he was six his father moved to Romsdal, one of the fairest spots in Norway. The influence of these beautiful surroundings is felt in the deep regard for Nature that he shows in his writings. After a peaceful childhood and a fortunate education Björnson gained a footing first in the field of journalism and later in literature. In 1857, he succeeded Ibsen as leader of the National Theater in Bergen and, like his predecessor, became an ardent champion of the opposition against

Danish influence. He understood Norwegian weaknesses and his implicit faith in the goodness of human nature gave to him an unconquerable optimism in all of his criticism. His great idea was to improve and civilise his country by any means in his power. "That he is typically national is further to be ascribed to the fact that he is a popular spirit, a spiritual representative of the people. Minds like Kierkegaard's in the domain of religion, Ibsen's in that of morals, Andrae's in politics, doubt the trustworthiness of universally accepted truths from the very fact of their being such. The exact opposite is the case with Björnson; even in his hottest struggle with convention, he fights in the name of the great majority." Since it was impossible for many of the cultivated literary class to yield to attacks upon their aesthetic creeds that had been established by the Danish, Björnson's first works did not produce universal approval. In 1865, after a decided lull of several years in his literary activity, he published *A Bankruptcy*, the first of his dramas dealing with modern society evils. The author was inspired with new or "second youth". "A burning love of truth has set its mark on him. What individuality there is in these books; what powerful appeal for truthfulness towards ourselves and towards others; what a wealth of new ideas on

all subjects---state and society, marriage and home life! Bjornson is a reconciliatory spirit; there is no bitterness in his warfare. April sunshine plays over his works, whilst Ibsen's in their somber earnestness lie in deep shadow. Ibsen loves the idea, the psychological and logical consequence---which drives Brand out of the church, Nora out of wedlock. Corresponding to this love of the abstract in Ibsen, we have in Björnson love of humankind."³ Bjornson retained his simple virtues throughout his life. Good humor and true optimism shine out as sincerely in *When the New Wine Blooms* as it does in any of his earlier dramas. The entire civilised world felt the loss of a great man when, after an illness of several months, he died on April 26, 1910.

The third of the three great Scandanavian dramatists possessed a genius similar to Poe's, and has imbued his teachings with a sordid pessimism that permits of little genuine pleasure in the study of them. The circumstances of his birth, childhood and youth produced bitter effects upon a nature whose predominant traits, as he himself said, were "doubt and sensitiveness to pressure". August Strindberg was born at Stockholm in 1849.

3. Brandes, George: *Henrik Ibsen. Björnsterne Björnson. Critical Studies*. London: William Heinemann. 1899.

His father had married, against the family's wishes, a bar-maid and August was not only an illegitimate child but was a member of a large family whose parents were always tired and who were forced to live in three small rooms. What little happiness the home provided was not accepted by August, who lived in constant warfare with the rest of the family. Everywhere he felt that he was oppressed; life for him seemed filled with drudgery and he early developed the morbidity that in later life was close to insanity. He attended the University at Upsala under the severest struggle with poverty. After trying medicine, the stage, tutoring, and journalism, he withdrew in desperation to a little island and wrote the first of his great dramas, *Master Olaf*. His shock of disappointment over its unfavorable reception was made even more intense by the fact that he was as yet uncertain of his own ability. But he continued his studies under the influence of Kierkegaard^{ke}, Eduard von Hartmann, Hugo, and Dickens, and wrote several successful books. In 1884 he published *Married*, twelve stories to support his views of sex morality. After threatened criminal proceedings for speaking "offensively of rites held sacred by the established religion of Sweden" he was freed and received by the youth of his country as their leader. The impression

made upon him by the accusation was embitterment, and two years later he published another series of stories that openly denounced the feminist movement as it was at that time being promulgated by Ibsen and Björnson in Norway. Influenced by Nietzsche, his teachings became more and more individualistic with extreme emphasis upon the moral, mental and biological inferiority of woman. *The Father*, a presentation of the duel between the sexes, was the startling and horrible climax of the pessimist's severity. Between 1885 and 1894 Strindberg wrote eight naturalistic plays, of which *Miss Juliet* is the most widely known. Strindberg's view of life remained pessimistic but more and more he saw that back of earth's disappointments, humiliations and sufferings, a higher existence waited for man and the persistence of the secret powers urging him on to an unattainable goal made of his life here a tragedy. In the closing line of his last drama, *The Great Highway*, he pleads for mercy as one who has suffered more than most "from the inability to be that which we will to be". The latter part of Strindberg's life was very peaceful. Edwin Björkman, writing in the last year (1912) of his life says: "In the sheltered nook which he has established for himself at Stockholm he busies himself with philological studies, interrupted

mainly by visits from his children, of which there are five from the three marriages. Flowers and music are what he loves next to his children and his work. From that corner where he hears nothing but echoes of the storms that are still raging at times about his public utterances he follows with keen eye whatever is happening in the world of letters. And in the meantime his fame is steadily spreading and growing. On the European continent his name is constantly mentioned together with those of Ibsen⁴ Björnson."

4. August Strindberg: Plays---The Dream Play; The Link; The Dance of Death, I and II. Introduction by Edwin Bjorkman. London: Duckworth and Company. 1913.

Chapter II.

Political.

Ibsen was, as William Archer says, a born aristocrat, and while he believed that a Democracy was an arrangement by which the whole people have a certain share in the control of the government he had no use for it unless it implied a "leveling-up" of individuals and nation. In 1885, after an absence of several years during which time the Liberals had won a victory over the Conservatives, Ibsen returned to Norway. In an address to a crowd of workmen at Trondhjem, he praised the progress that had been made but expressed disappointment that the most indispensable individual rights---freedom and independence in thought and speech---were far less secured under the new order of things than he had thought possible. "An element of nobility must be introduced into our national life, into our Parliament, and into our Press. Of course, it is not nobility of birth that I am thinking of, nor of money, nor yet of knowledge, nor even of ability and talent: I am thinking of nobility of character, of will, of soul." Three years earlier Ibsen had first shown aristocratic principles in his writing. Through Dr. Stockmann he preaches his forcible doctrine that the majority is always in the

wrong: "The strongest man in the world is he who stands
alone."⁵ In the same year he wrote to Dr. George Brandes,
"Björnson says 'The majority is always right'; and as a
practical politician he is bound, I suppose, to say so.
I, on the contrary, of necessity say, 'The minority is al-
ways right'. Naturally I am not thinking of that minority
as the stagnationists who are left behind by the great
middle party, which with us is called Liberal; I mean that
minority which leads the van, and pushes on to points
which the majority has not yet reached."⁶ And because the
majority is always behind, Ibsen sees a lamentable loss
of national dignity. In Rosmersholm he develops his idea
of spiritual aristocracy by attacking the plebeianism of
parties and pleading for ennoblement of political democracy.
The politician does not dare to be sure of anything for
fear public opinion may check him in his very next move.
Kroll and Mortensgaard, representatives of the popular
party, are stubborn fanatics willing to turn justice and
morality upside down for the sake of their party program.
Under the crafty disguise of Christianity as the element

5. An Enemy of the People.

6. Schiller says in Wilhelm Tell, "Der Starke ist am
mächtigsten allein."

most needed, Mortensgaard urges Rosmer to join: "What the party requires is a Christian element---something that everyone will respect." But Rosmer has long been of the opinion that partisanship means more than prestige: "It seems to me that within the last few years people are beginning to show greater independence of thought." Ibsen has endowed Rosmer with nobility of soul but incompetency to battle against public opinion in order to impart his principles of freedom to the masses.

Björnson was interested in politics even in his youth and became one of Norway's most influential political leaders. Because he feels himself borne up by the past history and present aims of his country, he pleads for the cause of the great majority and he yearns for civic freedom just as forcibly as Ibsen and Strindberg plead for individual freedom. All three realise the injustice of being bound to a tyranny that tends to warp the soul of morality itself. Björnson thinks it is impossible to reconcile existing monarchy with modern conditions. Björnson's King revolts against the whole institution of lies---State, army, church, society---but fails in his attempt because he is "a scion of a decrepit race". At the very moment when it seems that he can begin life over again and rule as one of the people, death and

vengeance interfere. "Either she (CLara) saw him, or she imagined she saw him, standing before her. But his blood-stained, maltreated, crippled form standing in the way of her criminal advance towards the throne---is that not a symbol of maltreated humanity revolting against monarchy at the very moment when monarchy wishes to atone! It's guilt through thousands of years is too black. Fate is inflexible." Tyranny has secured too firm a foothold to be supplanted by a democratic government. Flink says, "What is a monarchy, I ask you? Nothing more or less than an insurance business in which a whole crew of priests, officials, noblemen, landed proprietors, merchants and military men hold shares." When their interests are at stake, the acted lie upon which constitutional monarchy rests causes no remorseful or even disturbing reflections and just as the king was powerless in his youth to choose friends, religion, and vocation, so is he now helpless in his desire to lead his people under the banner of truth.

7

Lucky Pehr in his position of Oriental ruler learns that he must sacrifice his personal considerations to the laws made by his forefathers. He makes some substitutes by way of compromises in politics even though he cries out

that "a poor ruler is forced by political considerations to do so many despicable things", but when the administration forces a bride upon him he rebels. It is the tyrannical power behind the throne that must be checked. Ivar Ingemundson⁸ sees the need of a king who could strike down powerful chieftains with one blow: "What is the crusader's song but the expression of that desire for freedom, that joy in active life, which breaks all bounds and loses itself in the infinite?"

The Pretenders represents Ibsen's idea of a good ruler. Haakon enters into the conflict for the throne with fortune, self-confidence and right on his side: "Deep and warm is the faith within me---and I blush not to own it---that I alone am he who in these times can sway the land to its weal. Kingly birth begets kingly duty." He sees much to be mended in Norway: "Norway's realm, as Harold and Olaf built it up, may be likened to a church that stands as yet unconsecrated. The walls soar aloft with mighty buttresses; the vaultings have a noble span, the spire points upward like a fir tree in the forest; but the life, the throbbing heart, the fresh blood-stream, is lacking to the work; I will bring consecration! Norway has been a kingdom; it

shall become a people." Ibsen's doctrine is on the side of right, not might. It is this spirit that makes him support the minority and youth with its vigor and stamina. Dr. Stockmann says, "It's young and vigorous standard-bearers we must look for, my friends; we must have new captains at all the outposts. It's they that have got to whip up the ferment of the future." On Independence Day, Stensgaard tells the crowd that great possibilities exist among the masses and the youth of the land will develop them. Björnson treats the expansiveness of America rather disparagingly but Ibsen sympathizes with the natural freedom permitted there.

Civil strife is a great danger to national progress. In Sigurd Slembe, Koll says: "I remember that in my own life there was a time when we had two and three rightful kings, and they brought civil strife into every part of the land. It was the saddest time that I ever lived through." The rancorous and vulgar personalities indulged in by the characters in Rosmersholm are typical of party strife everywhere. In 1885, after a great political battle, Ibsen observed Norway as "inhabited not by two million

9. An Enemy of the People.

10. The League of Youth.

human beings, but by two million cats and dogs." Bjornson was less aristocratic than Ibsen and therefore tolerated the vast majority as Ibsen never could, but he dreaded malice and hatred and longed for good and genuine politicians such as Harald¹¹, who could face bitter attacks with manly, resolute courage. The ardor of the youthful politician as he goes confidently forward in the accomplishment of his desire to become a cabinet officer is Björnson's illustration of the possibilities of being great without the hardening process proclaimed by the doctor, "The only people that are fit for political life nowadays are those whose hearts have been turned to stone." Harald represents the middle ground between the advocates of absolute invulnerability and the passive suffering martyrs like Halvdan, who have the right on their side but are too sensitive to endure the attacks of public opinion, which makes no distinction between falsity and truth.

11. The Editor.

Chapter III.

Ecclesiastical.

The great evil that retards efficiency of the Church as an institution and that prevents the highest development of the spiritual life of the individual is conventionality. Björnson satirizes the attitude of the ministers from the ship, when they meet to discuss the possibility of miracles.¹² The people will expect an explanation and as ministers they are bound to satisfy their spiritual cravings. No hesitancy is shown by them in acknowledging the doubt within their own minds but never must they let their flocks suspect such a thing! Bratt says: "I promised the miracle to those who would believe. I promised because thus it was written---altho I myself doubted---for I had never seen it come to anyone that believed." The idea that Christianity has for its ideal a pious life has come down through the ages with a narrowing meaning applied to the word "pious." "Christianity lives on dogmas and formulas instead of ideals".¹³ In Brand, Ibsen protests indignantly against the pietistic

12. Beyond Our Power, I.

13. The King.

practices that make it possible for the mayor and dean to congratulate themselves and Brand because of the showiness, elegance and pomp of the new church. This was the very thing Brand hoped to do away with and in his disappointment says:

"Yes, that is so, and all we do

Is, change an old lie for a new."

The Bishop knows that Leonarda is probably a good woman but, because she has never come to church to show a desire to expiate sin, he refuses to accept her as righteous.¹⁴

A sacrifice of principles to form causes hypocrisy in the Church. For weeks the Riis family plan for the communion service. They live a life of wrangling and Mrs. Riis says: "Our life is not given to truth and love." But they hold to a false belief that all their sins will be expiated at the communion table. Mr. Riis, inwardly praying that his wicked power may not be injured, comments, "How would it be if we could not find religious consolation against the inconstancy and treachery of the world!" Halvdan Rejn¹⁵ bemoans the hollowness of a religion that permits its followers to read the malicious things in a paper and then

14. Leonarda.

15. The Editor.

calmly go to church for worship. Strindberg has presented two wicked old hypocrites in Advent. The Other One explains to the Judge and Old Lady that their prosperity was from the Evil One and retribution must come to them.

Brand represents the champion of things as they "ought to be". He longs for a return to the "perfect Adam" but sham and falsity prevail in spite of his earnest efforts. Strindberg mercilessly ridicules the feeling on the part of people that the Church is infallible. In The Link, the Judge says, "I find it difficult to believe that the minutes of the Vestry Board, countersigned by the Pastor and eight other trustworthy men, can be inaccurate". When Lucky Pehr, as Church Warden, is requested to sign the petition for Rector, he is given the privilege of reading long preliminaries showing the incompetence of opposing candidates or of signing immediately. The Petitioner is over-joyed at his choice of the easy way and says: "Admirable! I thank your Grace."

Björnson, at the time he wrote Beyond Our Power, I, had drifted from his passion for the boundless and had come to believe that man, because he was afraid of the consequences of his own acts, often attempted to build up a supernatural sham-existence around himself. This craving for the infinite, best exemplified in Sang and Elias, involves the danger of sacrificing all reality in life. The

perfection of Sang's faith is made possible by the sacrifices of wife, money, children's education, and his own health. "He lives in some region apart from the rest of us", says Clara. Björnson does not solve the problem of miracles but he does show that some things are beyond human power and intelligence. The question arises as to whether the prophets of old may not have been capable of more than we because they lacked so much in other directions. Modern society taxes physical and mental and spiritual strength to the utmost, which in a measure may explain Sang's going beyond his power. The evil is more clearly censured in *Beyond Our Power*, II. Björnson was lead away from the established Church through the reading of Darwin, Mill, Spencer, and Comte, and now viewed the tyranny of the supernatural with disparagement. In his two plays on the subject he points out the placing of life's purpose beyond the life actually known to man as one of the greatest obstacles between mankind and a happier existence.

It has been suggested in the preceding paragraph that a life lived apart from others prevents attainment of man's purpose in life. Idealization is not the element in religion that the practical world wants. When Brand urges the peasant to suffer in God's service, the answer comes back

"Nor his nor yours is my affair;

My own is hard enough to bear."

Falk, in the name of the Church, urges the strikers to have patience. ¹⁶ They, knowing the inability of the Church to control either workmen or employers and feeling their unrestrained freedom, rush headlong into conditions that cause despair, violence, murder, ruin of self and family. The monarch in The King laments the failure of Christianity to accomplish its mission of becoming the "salt of the earth". He says, "Christianity ought to keep an eye on the monarchy. Ought to tear the falsehood away from it! It seems to me that it scarcely ought any longer to allow monarchy, like a seductive harlot, to keep militarism before the people's eyes as an ideal---seeing that that is exactly contrary to the teachings of Christianity---or to encourage class divisions, luxury, hypocrisy and vanity. Monarchy has become so all-pervading a lie that it infects even the most upright of men." Not only does Christianity fail to satisfy society but it is likewise lacking in freedom of spiritual truths for the individual. Nora knows nothing of religion except what Pastor Hansen has told her but now that she has emancipated herself she intend to "look into that matter too. I will see whether what he taught me is right or, at any rate, whether it is

17

right for me".

18

Rector Rörlund represents a dangerous type of selfishness. His egotism, veneered with a manner of righteousness, makes him self-satisfied "sitting here in the cool shadow and turning our backs towards the quarters from which distraction comes." This "moral pillar of society" preaches against progress as a "brazen spirit of destruction" attacking the most vital truths. Brand's religion is totally lacking in charity. He rends from himself "whatever in this world is dear" and demands the same of others. "All or nothing" is the motto of his iron will and through his selfish saintliness he causes more suffering than a wicked sinner could have caused. But Brand's selfishness in religion is not intentional, as is that of Sigurd Slembe who becomes a crusader merely for the purpose of winning fame. Björnson pleads strongly for liberty and freedom. His passionate love of Norway cries out against the selfish interests of a so-called Christian whose ideals have become destroyed. Another form of selfishness is the cowardly fear of what others may think or say, best illustrated by the Bishop in Leonarda and Pastor

17. A Doll's House.

18. Pillars of Society.

Manders in Ghosts.

The "old law" demanded an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth". Ibsen and Strindberg see a tendency to retain this old idea in modern religion. In *The Vikings at Helgeland*, not only the spirit of revenge rules but likewise the old northern paganism with its principle of survival of the fittest in courage. The grimness of the old turns into a superstitious element. Sigurd says, "Fate rules in the deeds that shape our lives" but Hiördis answers, "Evil Norns hold sway over the world." In *Creditors*, Tekla comments: "Christians say that our actions are governed by Providence; others call it Fate; in either case, are we not free from all liability?" Gustav answers: "In a measure, yes; but there is always a narrow margin left unprotected, and there the liability applies in spite of all." Rosmer's superstition destroys his will. "There is no judge over us; therefore we must do justice upon ourselves." Ibsen shows the wrong of preaching that the spiritual life means suffering. Brand believes in a God who shows his love by chastisement:

"Do thy work and bear thy pain!"

"Men whom misery has not mann'd

Are worthless of the saving hand!"

And then at the end comes the Voice: "He is the God of love." The Father is a believer in a God of strife but in his distress he prays to a "God! who lovest children!" Eleanora

in Easter believes that "all must suffer on good Friday, to remind them of Christ's suffering on the cross."

19

Likewise, Jeanne learns the meaning of, "O Crux! Ave spes mica!" Brand destroys the happiness of Agnes and Einar:

"dance then

But where your dancing ends

Is quite another thing, my friends!"

20

Parson Manders also causes untold suffering by influencing Helena Alving to remain with her husband: "It is the very mark of the spirit of rebellion to crave for happiness in this life. What right have we human beings to happiness? We have simply to do our duty."

19. There are Crimes and Crimes.

20. Ghosts.

Chapter IV.

Professional, Commercial and Industrial.

A. Professional.

The Scandinavian dramatists all suffered from the tyrannical power of the Press. Björnson denies, however, the accusation of Stockholm critics, who condemned The Editor as a "pamphleteering attack on the editor of a well known journal". He wrote in March, 1875: "That is a deliberate lie. I have studied the journalist type, which is here represented, in many countries besides my own. The Chief characteristic of this type is to be actuated by an inordinate egotism that is perpetually being inflamed by passion; that makes use of bogeys to frighten people, and does this in such a way that while it makes all its honest contemporaries afraid of any freedom of thought it also produces the same result on every single individual by means of reckless persecution." The editor in Björnson's drama is an unscrupulous rogue who acknowledges that it is his duty as "merely the servant of the public" to please public opinion. The play is a fierce satire upon modern journalism that enslaves itself to personal and party prejudice, thereby sacrificing its highest power to dishonesty, corruptness, and maliciousness. Ibsen also condemns

the journalist for neglecting his heavy responsibility to help emancipate the masses. Before Dr.Stoskmann is disillusioned, he says, "One cannot but be proud to know that the enlightened independent press is on one's side."²¹

Both Ibsen and Björnson have given valuable examples to show that power should be used for expansiveness and progress. Dr.Stockmann, as a man of science, makes a study of conditions at the Baths in order that he may prevent disease. The high-principled man expects that he will receive everlasting gratitude for having found a plan for remedying the evil. But because wealth means everything to the wickedly-selfish inhabitants of the town, human lives must pay the price of economic demands. In the same family, Petra is giving her strength to the school and is striving to advance ideas that only meet with bitterest²² opposition. Svava is more successful in her kindergarten movement, having already secured two hundred girls as assistants and having won much admiration from outsiders. America is looked upon as a country of progress and it was²³ there that Hans Kampe made investigations upon which his

21. An Enemy of the People.

22. The Gauntlet.

23. The New System.

new book is based. Like Dr. Stockmann, he has discovered a truth that must be revealed for the good of his country. Power of science, letters, education, or art is looked upon by Ibsen as a gift that may rise above the commonplace. Ornulf, bound down with grief, is comforted when he sings the funeral hymn over his dead son.

But genius has its imperfections along with its greatness, and it would seem that they are proportionate. Birgit says to Turman: "Men of imagination---particularly men of genius---are children. They receive things with wide-open senses and in absolute innocence. You can mould the imagination of Tygesen as if it were wax." Eilert
24
25 26 27
Lövborg, Ulric Brendel, and Lyngstrand represent a large class of dreamers---visionaries who fail to accomplish possibilities because they are conquered by their frailties.
28
Prof. Ernst succeeds in writing his book but because of
29
fanaticism he is imprisoned. Prof. Rubek acknowledges that

24. Love and Geography.

25. Hedda Gabler.

26. Rosmersholm.

27. The Lady from the Sea.

28. The King.

29. When We Dead Awaken.

he is an artist and takes no blame to himself for frailties that cling to him. Irene calls him a poet because "there is something apologetic in the word. Something that suggests forgiveness of sins and spreads a cloak over all frailty." Birgit says of Henning, "You know there is something about painting that makes it so easy to slip." ³⁰
The Master Builder is weak through a combination of genius and egotism as well as an unhappy moral self-criticism.

No profession escapes censure of its weaknesses. The soldier is pictured as a vacillating man, generally reckless with his morals. Captain Alving, when a young lieutenant, was "brimming over with the joy of life" and in spite of his coarseness had power to win hearts through his apparent good nature. ³¹ Not much is told about The Father as a soldier, but Strindberg most probably expresses his own opinion through the statement of the pastor who feels that the "Word of God will have little effect upon a trooper." General Rosen, who distinguished himself as an officer in the American War, now throws his time away ³² drinking and idling. ³³ The pathetic figure of old Ekdal,

30. Love and Geography.

31. Ghosts.

32. Leonarda.

33. The Wild Duck.

and the disgusting attitude of Lieutenant Hamar towards his horse are types of inefficiency. Strindberg is merciless in his attacks upon the trivialities of the law profession. He satirizes the incident of Pehr's summons to the City Court to have "tax No.2867 legalized". No litigation is to take place, but the case must be presented in order to verify the facts. In *The Link*, the Judge overlooks the real issue for the minor one of accusation in order that he may make a decision. The necessity of bringing domestic affairs into Court is deplored by Strindberg because of the humiliation and suffering it causes to the family. In *The League of Youth*, Ibsen also shows the disagreeableness of pending lawsuits.

Truthfulness has already been mentioned as one of the ethical principles needed in the professions. Petra hates the falsehood and hypocrisy in the schools: "Do you think we don't have to tell them many and many a thing we don't believe ourselves?"
35 36
Frederick Ravn, having written articles praising the new system, refuses to acknowledge his stupidity. Concealing the truth through trickery is

34. A Bankruptcy.

35. An Enemy of the People.

36. The New System.

considered by Ibsen, Björnson, and Strindberg to be as demoralizing as any other kind of falsity. We are not told that Miss Tesman really suffered as a result of mortgaging her property, but Ibsen does place blame upon Judge Brack for telling her that it was "merely a form".³⁷ In *Advent*, the Judge is held responsible for his wickedness in taking illegal advantage of his victim's ignorance of the law. The temptation in the journalistic world is to conceal or to deny the truth.³⁸ Hovstad shrewdly keeps still until the Baths are established before he attempts his selfish scheme.

Egotism leads to selfishness. The Master Builder first feels his importance as an architect and gradually develops the idea that he expresses thus: "I will never retire! I will never give way to anybody! Never of my own free will!" The most wholesome illustration of unselfish consideration on the part of an influential lawyer is in *A Bankruptcy*. Level-headed, capable, sympathetic, Brent understands the poor helpless man before him and after winning Tjelde back to truthfulness stands back of him as a loyal friend. In contrast to the majority of artists that are absorbed in their own selfish interests, Adolphe,

37. *Hedda Gabler*.

38. *An Enemy of the People*.

the painter in *There are Crimes and Crimes*, remains good and faithful even when his rival takes Henriette away from him. He explains it in this way: "I became conscious of my guilt, repented, decided to turn over a new leaf and arranged my life like that of a penitent. Everything is a grace, but it isn't granted unless you seek it---seek!"

The professional man that stands out especially in the dramas of Ibsen as the family friend is the doctor. He is always the same keen-minded man who is interested in the moral as well as the physical health of society. Dr. Fieldbo says to the Chamberlain concerning Erik: "You have taken care to develop his faculties but not to form his character. You have lectured him upon the honor of his family, but you have not guided and moulded him so that honor became to him an irresistible instinct." ³⁹ Dr. Relling ⁴⁰ is Ibsen's protagonist against irrational reform; he says that Gregers Werle is suffering from a national disease, "rectitudinal fever", and advocates his own stimulating principle of keeping up the make-believe in life in order to save people from self-contempt and despair.

Slavery to public opinion causes many evils in professions. Lucky Pehr is surprised that the editor was

39. The League of Youth.

40. The Wild Duck.

for him yesterday and today abuses, but he soon learns that public opinion in the form of the burgomaster is responsible. Fear of giving offense causes the Morning Crow to publish an elaborate account of the celebration in honor of the Schulze statue when in truth only three persons⁴¹ were present! Hovstad inserts a moral story occasionally⁴² to keep the confidence of the people, and The Beacon needs Rosmer's name to give it prestige. The teacher is also forced to be on his guard, a rule that is expressed by the Schoolmaster to the Sexton in Brand:

"We two serve another law
Than that which holds the mass in awe;
Set by the State to guard and guide,
Look, we must stand against the tide,
Cherish the Church and Education,
And keep aloof from agitation;
Briefly, in nothing take a side."

41. An Enemy of the People.

42. Rosmersholm.

B. Commercial and Industrial.

When Björnson wrote *Beyond Our Power*, II, the modern labor movement had not yet gained its present hold on the Scandinavian countries. The sharp class distinction often made the employer unbearably insolent and the workman an abject slave. Björnson endeavors in his play to teach the propertied and educational classes the justice and wisdom of a more humane attitude towards the laboring class. The tyranny of the capitalist is a great evil in a community. Sverd in speaking of the strike says: "If both parties to this conflict could only stick to plain reality, what do you think they would discover? That the enemy which they both fight has nothing in common with either of them. That he is thriving on their strife, because it places both of them more securely in his clutch. I am thinking of the capitalist." The desire for power at any price makes one of the factory owners urge the formation of a union that will "let the workmen find out that if they make trouble they'll run up against a power that is not hampered by any kind of consideration. That will make them meek, I think---while it will make us more respected than we have ever been." Again, in this play, Björnson preaches the folly of trying to plunge into the

impossible and unnatural. The attempt to live beyond our power results in anarchism and "lack of responsibility, utter lack of moral stamina, displayed by our men of means in their wasting of millions". Progress is retarded and in the end the burden falls upon both employer and workman. A Bankruptcy and John Gabriel Borkman also have for their central theme the attempt to live beyond one's means, In each case, disaster results and only a complete change saves Tjelde from as tragic a fate as that of Borkman.

In A Bankruptcy, Björnson makes a strong appeal for truth on the lowest plane---simple honesty in everyday middle-class life. Tjelde disguises speculation under the names of hope, poetry, and genius, but Berent says: "You have mixed up falsehood and truth so long that you have forgotten the simplest laws of commerce. To speculate during bad times, on the chance of their becoming better, is all very well for those who can afford it." Concealment of truth is a lie, and Valborg expresses the unhappiness that is pretty certain to result: "I cannot imagine how one could be more cruelly wronged than to be allowed to assume a position that was nothing but a lie, to live up to means that had no real existence but were merely a sham---one's clothes a lie, one's very existence a lie!" Tjelde learns that he has caused an infinite amount of

injury through his deceitfulness, but after his reform he is able through honest labor and methods to pay back in almost unbelievable measure. Harald Gran, a rich manufacturer, has behind him the security of prestige and honestly-earned wealth. He works for the good of the people, and the king says of him: "No question of selfishness stood in the way of his doing that". That honesty, kindness, and magnanimity can exist in business relationships is shown by Strindberg in Easter. Lindquist has all the ordinary excuses for becoming a revengeful creditor but because of good done by Heyst to him in his youth he cancels the debt and in place of the "giant who frightens children" becomes an "angel in disguise."

To a certain extent it is unavoidable for a man of wealth to risk the money of others, but the evil seems to be in the concealment of the fact. John Gabriel Borkman never realises his wrong-doing but persists that he is a man of power and ability and if left alone could accomplish much with the "borrowed" money. He is like the ones described by Mr.X in Parish: "There are persons who remain children all their lives so that they cannot control their

unlawful desires. Then comes the opportunity and you have your criminal." It is hard to tell just how far Strindberg excuses the forger and the embezzler. Certain it is that he condemns the crime, but the motive in the individual seems to be the result of an innate weakness. Mr.Y, when a student at the University, committed the crime of forgery totally unconscious of the risk and consequences. Heyst, in Easter, must have had the same weakness, for his daughter inherits the inability to think before she acts as shown in her manner of obtaining the Easter lily. Ibsen leaves the "offender to settle with the law."⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ Nora is saved through the relenting of the man who holds her in his power.

Egotism develops a resort to trickery in many business transactions. Bernick for personal benefit buys all the property for the new railroad and excuses his act on the ground that "only in my hands can all the property be of permanent benefit to the many who will live by it."⁴⁶
⁴⁷ Werle, a merchant and manufacturer, secures control of his partner's share by refusing to take any of the blame in the

44. The League of Youth.

45. A Doll's House.

46. Pillars of Society.

47. The Wild Duck.

of false maps for timber lands. Doubt as to the justice of his act may remain, but he caused much suffering nevertheless. The new system looked doubtful but Frederick Ravn tricked his countrymen and "to believe became a⁴⁸ habit, and all the doubters were laughed into silence."

Chapter V.

Social.

A. Home and Family.

In the preceding chapters a study has been made of practical moral codes for civic, ecclesiastical, professional, and business relationships. Ibsen, Björnson, and Strindberg have placed even greater stress upon ethical standards involving thoughts, feelings, intentions, and actions of individuals in their associations with one another in purely social intercourse, at the foundation of which are the moral practices of the home. "Homes are the most precious things a nation makes. Their national characteristics mean reverence for their past and possibilities for their future."⁴⁹ Harald Rejn is made strong to face the attacks of political life by the dream of a happy home with Gertrud. He says, "I think that behind every man's public life you can see his private life---whether he has a real home, and what it is like, or whether he only has a place he lives in---that is to say, no real home."⁵⁰ Jaeger, Norway's foremost literary historian, says:

49. The King.

50. The Editor.

"Björnson is as consistent in his glorification of the home and family as is Ibsen in raising the personality, the individual, to the skies." A Bankruptcy first raised the curtain upon the Norwegian home, with its joys and sorrows, with its conflicts and tenderness. The Tjelde home passes through an evolution that begins with the unhappiness of the entire family in their attempts to keep up appearances. The burden necessarily falls upon Mrs. Tjelde, who is worn out with outward cares and inward worries. Society demands entertaining and she is forced to supply their guests with the choicest food that is not rightfully theirs to give. But what a change takes place after they begin to live a real life! Their little home becomes to them a Paradise and Mr. Tjelde says gratefully to his wife: "My dear, God has blessed our house now!"

Love and truth form the basis of happiness; where they exist, all other virtues are found. Björnson repeatedly teaches that reform should begin at home, the real home that "holds love instead of subservience, comfort instead of ceremony, truth instead of flattery." The Stranger in After the Fire beholds life as filled with sham things---"Nothing could stand being handled in our home. Nothing! Vanity, vanity! I have beheld life from every quarter, from every standpoint, from above and be-

low, but always it has seemed to me like a scene staged for my particular benefit." But love and truth demand sacrifices. Ibsen deplores the selfishness that obscures the rights of members of a family to live as individuals. Dr. Stockmann's home is the only apparent one in which each member of the family may be said to be in perfect sympathy with the others.⁵¹ Appreciation of their comforts, wise economy, companionship, devotion, and geniality unite them, while hospitality and consideration for outsiders cultivate within the family circle a deeper meaning of home happiness. Even when Peter criticises their way of living they forgive him because, as the doctor says, "Peter's a lonely bachelor, poor devil! He has no home to be happy in; only business, business."

"Living the lie" is a recurring phrase in Ibsen's dramas. Moral cowardice that separated an individual from the highest independence becomes a sin that destroys not only his happiness but that of others. Helmer's pride in his moral principles blinds him to Nora's sacrificing love and his selfishness crushes her.⁵² He had said, "Home life ceases to be free and beautiful as soon as it is founded

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51. An Enemy of the People.

52. A Doll's House.

on borrowing and debt." Not only had Nora violated that cherished principle but she had likewise lied to him, thereby ruining another of his ruling ideas: "In such an atmosphere of lies, home life is poisoned and contaminated in every fiber. Every breath the children draw contains some germ of evil." Nora's innocent falsehood was no crime, but Mrs. Alving's deliberate lying to Oswald caused an unnecessary amount of suffering. "In my superstitious awe for duty and the proprieties, I lied to my boy, year after year." Consequently the boy had implicit faith in his father and denied the possibility of heredity evil in him, thereby causing untold suffering to himself: "If it had only been something inherited---something one wasn't responsible for! But this! To have thrown away so shamefully, thoughtlessly, recklessly, one's own happiness, one's own health, everything in the world--one's future, one's very life--! And then, mother, to cause you all this sorrow!" But it is when she sees the fatal love between Oswald and Regina that she speaks: "Now I can speak out plainly. And no ideals shall suffer, after all!" Ibsen believed strongly that there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." Gregers Werle admits of no compro-

mise to truthfulness and thereby wrecks a family's peace
after fifteen years of happiness.⁵⁴

C.H.Herford says that there are two men in Ibsen:
(1)idealist, exalted to the verge of sentimentality; and
(2)critic, hard, inexorable, remorseless. "Love for the
idealist Ibsen is a passion which loses its virtue when it
reaches its goal, which inspires only while it aspires.
Marriage for the critic Ibsen is an institution beset with
pitfalls into which those are surest to step who enter it
blinded with love."⁵⁵ There are various forms of blindness,⁵⁶
such as the childish innocence of Nora, the maidenly ig-⁵⁷
norance of Helena Alving, the idealized admiration of
Agnes,⁵⁸ and the craving for happiness or position of num-
erous others. Failure to adjust themselves to conditions
through some form of selfishness seems to Ibsen the cause
of unhappiness between married couples. It is impossible
for Ibsen to see the humorous side of it as does Bjornson
in The Newly Married Couple. After two days of married

54. The Wild Duck.

55. Collected Works of Ibsen. Introduction to Volume I.

56. A Doll's House.

57. Ghosts.

58. Brand.

life, Axel finds himself bound to a set of ridiculous traditions. Laura and her parents are fond of him but expect a sacrifice of his principles to theirs. Patience and forbearance win the day and save the family pride as well as insure future happiness. But even if George Tesman had possessed Axel's managing ability he could never have subordinated Hedda Gabler. She married George simply because she was tired of old frivolities and wanted a new adventure in society. Having tricked her husband, she will not be outwitted now, either by him or his meddling aunt, and thus living as her "father's daughter" she destroys all chances of happiness.

Another example of incompatibility between wife and husband is that of Aline and Halvard Solness in The Master Builder. As an artist of sensitive and idealistic sentiment, Solness needed a wife who could sympathize and guide instead of one who lived merely as a "duty". He grows morbid as well as remorseful and laments thus: "That I might build homes for others I had to forego--forego for all time--the home that might have been my own." Aline is selfishly bound to the past--parents, childhood, home, dolls--and receives Halvard's efforts to please her in a cruelly passive way: "You may build as much as ever you like, Halvard, you can never build up again a real home

for me!" And thus, while the master builder's heart shrivels from lack of sympathy, she makes no effort to help him. Although the demand of genius for sacrificing consideration is really selfish, it may be controlled under the influence of love. After the reconciliation, Tygesen says, "It was I who drove you away. All geography and no love--that won't do, you see. But all love and no geography won't do either." At last he learns that marriage does not mean a sacrifice of his "sacred science" which, in turn, does not demand of him as a human being.

Dominance of one individual over another becomes an evil in the home as well as in larger social relationships. Nora was forced to agree with her father for fear of displeasing him: "He used to call me his doll-child, and played with me as I played with my dolls." No wonder that she merges her individuality so completely into that of her husband. He is a tyrant without realising it. Even her former friends must not be mentioned because he is satisfied with her alone! Through Nora, Ibsen protests indignantly against such a marriage: "Here I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I used to be papa's doll-child. And the children, in their turn, have been my dolls. I thought it fun when you played with me, just as the children did when I played with them. That has been our marriage,

Torvald." Now Nora realises that during the eight years of their married life they have been strangers and she leaves her husband until the "miracle of miracles" shall happen and communion of their souls will unite them in marriage. Helmer is not the only man that holds dominance over his wife's freedom. Ellida Wangel was helpless, forlorn, utterly alone when Wangel asked her to fill the void in his home, and she says, "It was not of my own free will that I cast in my lot with yours. The life we two lead with each other is really no marriage at all." She has no responsibility in the household, no care--nothing to do but to dream and to be made much of by her husband who loves her devotedly but selfishly. She says to him, "At home here there is nothing whatever to attach and bind me. You see how utterly without root I am in your house; how I have stood entirely outside of everything from the very first moment." The instant Wangel says to her, "Now you can choose in freedom, and on your own responsibility, Ellida.", she exclaims, "In freedom--and on my own responsibility? Responsibility! This--this transforms everything!" Selma, petted and adored, cries

59. The Lady from the Sea.

60. The League of Youth.

out, "Oh, how cruel you've been to me! It was my part always to accept--never to give. How I've thristed for a single drop of your troubles, your anxieties! But when I begged for it you only laughed me off."

Strindberg reserves his tenderest feelings and greatest concern for the child who serves as a link between parents even after love is gone. In *The Link* and *The Thunderstorm*, separation of parents does not prevent a deep consideration for the welfare of the child, a regard, that fails to be ideal because of the publicity that results from the lack of harmony between father and mother. In *There are Crimes and Crimes*, Maurice loves little Marion and refuses to leave without telling her goodbye. He says to Henriette, Now you demand the sacrifice of women. You shall have them, but if you ask for "innocent children, too, I'll send you packing". The whole tragedy in *The Father* depends upon Bertha who is devoted to both parents and is loved by them. Two of Ibsen's dramas have a similar significance in the relation of parents to child. Little Eyolf causes jealousy that separates the passionately-devoted wife from her husband, and only a tragedy can bring them back together. In a more wholesome way, Tygesen and

Karen are bound together through their daughter. Björnson⁶²
always presents the happier phases of family life. Sigurd
Slembe leaves his mother with a determination to make re-⁶³
compense to her for every tear she has shed. Laura,
⁶⁴ Valborg and Signe, ⁶⁵ Gertrud, ⁶⁶ Elias and Rachel are types of
loving and dutiful children.

- 62. Love and Geography.
- 63. The Newly Married Couple.
- 64. A Bankruptcy.
- 65. The Editor.
- 66. Beyond our Power.

B. Society.

Falsity in the home generally results from a desire to keep up family tradition or to be well-thought of in the community. Brand's mother says to him:

"Don't set your life at stake.

Keep up our family and name,

That's all the gratitude I claim."

In *An Enemy of the People*, society is said by Hovstad to be "under the thumb of a ring of wealthy men, men of old family and position in town". The burgomaster says, "Oh, the public has no need for new ideas. The public gets on best with the good old recognized ideas it has already."

Dr. Stockmann protests: "The whole of our flourishing social life is rooted in a lie!". But he stands alone against the "grand old municipality" whose servants do not dare to "fly in the face of public opinion." The satirical presentation of the citizens' mass meeting best illustrates Ibsen's indignation at the lack of stability shown in people who are slaves to public opinion. Again in this connection he preaches that the majority is always wrong. Like Nietzsche, Ibsen believed that the masses act mechanically and are therefore doomed to poison the spiritual life of a community. Dr. Stockmann is an advocate of individual

freedom in society: "The majority rallies around truths so stricken in years that they are sinking into decrepitude. When a truth is so old as that, it's in a fair way to become a lie." Bernick acknowledges that Lies and Shams are the pillars of society in the place of Truth and Freedom. Tjelde says, "Do you suppose that after I have been master of this town and the biggest man in the district, I would endure the disgrace of bankruptcy?"

Björnson's characters appear less shrewd and villainous in their intentions but just as blamable. The Evje family refuse to associate with anyone who lacks first-class credentials---those "considered to be so by people in general." Thus, while harmless themselves, they are led to sanction public immorality by associating with a man who is a menace. 67

Class distinction has been shown to be harmful and unjust in business relations. In purely social intercourse it is just as dangerous, because it destroys freedom. Pehr decides that the common good is "an agreement between a few private individuals" and Lisa says, "It should be everyone's good, but it isn't. Make it so, and it will be so". Strindberg sees the evil of forcing the weaker being to bow before the stronger. In Lucky Pehr,

the Shoemaker's soliloquy expresses it when he talks to the statue: "We need a big man to push forward when we turn out to be too little ourselves. We need your word to quote, since no one credits ours. Our little town needed your statue in order to become a city; your insignificant relatives needed your statue to help them get on and find occupations in this troublesome world---and, therefore, you stand so high above us all---a figure for naught but ciphers!" Miss Juliet represents the class struggle. Jean, the servant, says to Juliet: "Of course, there was not the least hope of winning you---but you symbolized the hopelessness of trying to get out of the class into which I was born". Björnson, in *The King*, shows the absurd "gulf that separates masters and men". The Mayor objects to the proposed railway carriages because he is unwilling to have his family associate with tradesmen. Alstad says, "There is certainly a different spirit in the place of late years---what with the factories, and the stranger workmen, and the summer visitors. We never used to have so much unrest or to hear so much of this talk of equality." The person in poorer circumstances longs to enjoy the luxury and freedom of the man of position or wealth, because he believes that he is happy. Bernick

reveals the truth about the tyranny of custom and convention when he says to Martha, "Do you know what we are, we who are reckoned the pillars of society? We are the tools of society, neither more nor less." Strindberg speaks through the Butler in Lucky Pehr and says that conventionality stands above all else in the rich man's home. Axel in Debit and Credit is supposed to be fortunate and happy, when truly he is alone: "Those that are still down hate me for climbing up, and those already up fear one coming from below."

Tyrannical power of leaders of society retards progress in Ibsen's communities. Krap tells Aune that his "first duty is to the society called Bernick & Co., for by it we all live." Aune says to Bernick, "I'm afraid for the many whom the machines will rob of their daily bread. You often talk of duty towards society, Consul, but it seems to me that society, too, has its duties. How dare science and capital set all this mechanism to work before society has educated a generation that can use it?" And Bernick can only reply, "You read and think too much, Aune." In Brand the mayor assumes that he has the common good and profit of the neighborhood as his sole desire but he refuses to go to the man who is in trouble because

he is not in his division:

"I do my duty with precision,

But always in my own Division."

Social egotism, especially in small communities, makes unfair demands upon individuals. Rebecca has a right to be happy but is forced by the Rosmersholm view of life to offer herself as a sacrifice. The same is true of Leonarda who is judged as a "woman with a past". Society makes the individual a victim of collective superstition, injustice, or stupidity. Two of the worst of these evils are the curse upon illegitimacy and the sanction of a difference of sex-standards, providing a special privilege for men to make women their victims. In *The Gauntlet*, Bjornson condemns such a social status. Dr. Nordan, a man who knows the wrongs of such a system but is cowed by public opinion, tells Svava that ninety out of a hundred, women inclusive, would allow to man a "special privilege." But the "new woman" has taken a different attitude and replies, "Women are showing themselves capable of self-control, while the men find it easier to make a law out of their lack of self-control." Björnson feels that woman comes nearer to the fountainhead of life and that it is through her as an indispensable corrective to check man's tendencies that society can best find a remedy for its evils.

Chapter VI.

The Individual.

Strindberg gives his own confession of faith in the Speeches to the Swedish Nation: "Since 1896 I have been calling myself a Christian....A registered Protestant I am and will remain, but I can hardly be called orthodox or evangelistic, but come nearest to being a Swedenborgian. I use my Bible Christianity internally and privately to tame my somewhat decivilized nature---decivilized by that veterinary philosophy and animal science (Darwinism) in which, as student at the University, I was reared....Only through religion, or the hope of something better, and the recognition of the innermost meaning of life as that of an ordeal, a school, or perhaps a penitentiary, will it be possible to bear the burden of life with sufficient resignation." He was moralistic from first to last and his dramas show an intellectual craving to understand human life. His play, *There are Crimes and Crimes*, was the result of his own struggle to find the higher life. In it he shows most forcibly the punishment measured out by God to the man who cannot distinguish good from evil and who deliberately tampers with vice. Adolphe becomes his spokesman and explains that conscience is the "horror .

inspired in our better selves by the misdeeds of our lower selves." He says again, "There are crimes not mentioned in the Criminal Code, and these are the worse ones for they have to be punished by ourselves, and no judge could be more severe than we are against our own selves."

Rosmersholm shows a similar struggle in man's soul, which Ibsen believes every serious-minded man must face if he hopes to make his life and convictions harmonious. He says that the "different spiritual functions do not develop evenly and side by side in any given human being. The acquisitive instinct hastens on from conquest to conquest. The moral consciousness, the conscience, on the other hand, is very conservative. It has deep roots in tradition and the past, generally. Hence arises the conflict in the individual." The modern idea that conscience is the result of social forces is sustained by Ibsen in Rosmersholm and The Master Builder. Each is the soul history of a sickly conscience brought into contact with a robust one, as found in Rebecca and Hilda, and in each case, destruction results from an excess of morbid fear. Strindberg delights to present the weak consciences of his characters. The Father is a story of a man who does actually become insane through irrational brooding.

The Judge and Old Lady in Advent suffer all kinds of torments until they finally repent and are assured that the star of hope still rises. Maurice in There are Crimes and Crimes, Adolphe in Creditors, and the outcast in Pariah are likewise victims of their own evil weaknesses. Cowardice and fear are closely related to each other. The Outcast flees from justice and wherever he goes feels the fear of a guilty conscience. The results of such an existence are varied---self-torture, doubt, sorrow, isolation, morbidity and oftentimes insanity.

The restraint of individualism to its proper
development is life's most important problem. ⁶⁸ Nora feels that before all else she is a human being and must necessarily leave her doll home in order that she may perform her duty in the world. The innate craving for action will be satisfied by some means. Hedda Gabler feels that she is ostracized from her "own set" and in despair attempts to "have power over a human destiny" only to find that everything she touches turns "ludicrous and mean". Ellida ⁶⁹ Wangel belongs to the people who live by the open sea and

68. A Doll's House.

69. The Lady from the Sea.

and her natural desire for freedom from herself as well as the Stranger is misinterpreted by both herself and her husband. As soon as she is free, Wangel understands it and says, "Your longing and yearning for the sea must have been the expression of an awakening and gnawing for freedom within you---nothing else." Maia's song represents the feeling of liberation:

"I am free! I am free! I am free!

No more life in the prison for me!

I am free as a bird! I am free!

For I believe I have awakened now--at last." 70

The three examples of wandering, adventuresome youth as found in Peer Gynt, Lucky Pehr, and Sigurd Slembe show an insatiable curiosity to find out the meaning of life. Personal ambition prompts each one to begin his journeys and each returns much wiser. Lisa says to Pehr, "Everything here in life is incomplete, Pehr. Remember that, and take the bad with the good." He learns the truth of her words by means of many humiliations and unpleasant experiences, and returns with the conviction that possibilities for real greatness are within himself, for he has power to penetrate the good and evil in life.

A similar spirit of adventure is seen in the individual who desires to reform or to have power over others.

Hilda literally forces the Master Builder to fulfil her wishes and her love for what is "thrilling" obscures any practical insight. Rebecca wanted to try her power over Rosmer and differs from Hilda only in having a more serious purpose in life. John Gabriel Borkman's passionate and unscrupulous eagerness to make people worship at his shrine encourages within him a code of morals that are fit for a scoundrel only.

The longing for revenge, strengthened by jealousy, "causes individual suffering. Rita Allmers hates little Eyolf because he is responsible for Alfred's decreasing devotion to her. In her blind rage she makes wishes and threats that bring the worst kind of retribution upon her, equal almost to that in *The Vikings*. Hedda Gabler causes more harm to others than to herself. Strindberg emphasizes the fact that an unchecked spirit of revenge results in domineering evil. His vampire women, especially, never hesitate to carry their wickedness outside the bounds of reason, as shown in *The Father*, *The Link*, *The Stronger*, and *There are Crimes and Crimes*. In the last of these, Maurice says to Henriette, "I believe that the evil within you draws me with the irresistible lure of novelty."

Adolphe says, "Henriette, let me tell you the grim truth. You, like he, have reached the border line of insanity. The demons of distrust have got hold of you, and each of you is using his own sense of partial guilt to wound the other with." In *Creditors*, Gustav becomes master of his adverse circumstances and secures his revenge by making Tekla the victim of public opinion.

Ibsen and Björnson maintain that idealization, if wrongly exaggerated, causes a great deal of suffering. Brand is saintly and has ability to accomplish wonderful things, but his efficiency is retarded through his mistaken view of God's demands upon human beings. Peer Gynt is harmless in his relations to others because he keeps his ideals for himself. In his endeavor to get away from all serious things he becomes a subject of cowardly egoism that acts under the disguise of falsehood. This, Ibsen condemns as a sin against the individual, and permits Peer to find people who are really themselves, only in the mad-house:

"Here a man is himself, and can utterly sever
Everything else from himself forever."

Personality must be real and must show itself in action. Björnson believes that the greatest danger lies in the individual's attempt to realise the unattainable. Pastor Sang in *Beyond our Power, I*, wastes his energies in trying to solve problems of faith and miracles while he neglects the actual circumstances of life. Both his son and daughter strive to carry out his ideals, but only the daughter succeeds to any great extent. She is impelled by a sense of the practical and says, "The earth can find its way through boundless space---why not we, too? If men didn't have a lot of resistance in them, life wouldn't stay in its proper course, as does the earth." Elias, as shown in *Beyond Our Power, II*, after using all his energies in futile efforts, plans to destroy hundreds of others with himself, believing that he is acting as an ideal martyr.

Some of the strongest characters in the dramas of Ibsen, Björnson, and Strindberg are the quiet, sacrificing ones that influence others from behind the scenes, so to speak. Miss Tesman in *Hedda Gabler*, Lona and Martha in *The Pillars of Society*, Ella Rentheim in *John Gabriel Borkman* are types of unselfishness and loyalty. Agnes supports Brand with her gentle faith in him as

Gertrud does Harald in *The Editor*. The three dramatists teach the power of love to conquer all. Swanwhite is one of the most beautiful examples in Strindberg. Cheerfulness and happiness may be found within oneself, as Christina says in *Easter*: "A cheerful mind shortens time." The others feel her influence and Eleanora says, "How sweet she is! Her whole being radiates an indefinable charm."

Appendix

A Tabulation of the Ethical Themes.

I. Political.

National Nobility of Character

An Enemy of the People

Rosmersholm

National Freedom as an Indispensable Right

An Enemy of the People

Rosmersholm

Sigurd Slembe

Expansiveness---America

The King

The New System

Pillars of Society

Purity of Politicians

The Editor

Right versus Might

An Enemy of the People

The Pretenders

Youth versus Age

The Editor

An Enemy of the People

The King

The League of Youth

The New System

Rosmersholm

Party Strife

The Editor

The Pretenders

Rosmersholm

Sigurd Slembe

Hypocrisy---The Lie

The King

The League of Youth

Tyrannical Power

The King

Lucky Pehr

Peer Gynt

Inefficiency of Leadership

Rosmersholm

II. Ecclesiastical.

Reverence for a Higher Power

Creditors

There are Crimes and Crimes

The Father

The Vikings

Passion for the Infinite and Unnatural

Beyond Our Power, I

Beyond Our Power, II

Practical Insufficiency of Christianity

Brand

A Doll's House

Beyond Our Power, I

Beyond Our Power, II

The King

Sacrifice of Principles to Form

Beyond Our Power, I

Brand

The King

Leonarda

Hypocrisy---The Lie

Advent

Beyond Our Power, I

Brand

The Editor

The Link

Lucky Pehr

The New System

Sigurd Slembe

Cowardice

Ghosts

Leonarda

Selfishness

Brand

The Editor

Pillars of Society

Sigurd Slembe

The "Old Law" in Modern Religion

Advent

Brand

There are Crimes and Crimes

Easter

The "Old Law" in Modern Religion (continued)

Ghosts

The Link

Rosmersholm

The Vikings at Helgeland

III. Professional.

Imperfections---Fracilities of Genius

Art

Creditors

The Lady from the Sea

The Master Builder

When We Dead Awaken

Army

Bankruptcy

The Father

Ghosts

Leonarda

The Wild Duck

Law

Easter

The Father

The League of Youth

The Link

Law (continued)

Lucky Pehr

Pariah

Letters

Hedda Gabler

The King

Love and Geography

Kindness---Friendliness

Art

There are Crimes and Crimes

Law

Bankruptcy

Medicine

A Doll's House

The Editor

The Father

The Gauntlet

The League of Youth

The Master Builder

The Wild Duck

Expansiveness---Progress

Art

The Pretenders

The Vikings at Helgeland

Education

An Enemy of the People

The Gauntlet

Letters

The New System

Medicine

An Enemy of the People

Truthfulness

Letters

The New System

Medicine

An Enemy of the People

Tyrannical Power

Journalism

An Enemy of the People

The Editor

Lucky Pehr

Rosmersholm

Slavery to Public Opinion

Education

Brand

Easter

An Enemy of the People

The King

Rosmersholm

Journalism

An Enemy of the People

Lucky Pehr

Rosmersholm

Hypocrisy---Trickery

Journalism

An Enemy of the People

The Editor

Lucky Pehr

Rosmersholm

Law

Advent

Hedda Gabler

Letters

The New System

Strife---Rivalry

Art

The Master Builder

Education

Debit and Credit

Journalism

A Doll's House

An Enemy of the People

The League of Youth

Rosmersholm

Selfishness

Art

The Lady from the Sea

The Master Builder

IV. Commercial and Industrial.

Tyrannical Power

Bankruptcy

Beyond Our Power, II

Kindness

Easter

The King

Efficiency

A Doll's House

The King

Pillars of Society

The Wild Duck

Truthfulness

Bankruptcy

Beyond Our Power, II

Selfishness

The Gauntlet

Speculation---Forgery---Embezzlement

Bankruptcy

A Doll's House

Easter

John Gabriel Borkman

The League of Youth

Pariah

Pillars of Society

Hypocrisy---Trickery

The New System

Pillars of Society

The Wild Duck

V. Social and Domestic.

Incompatibility in Married Life

A Doll's House

Ghosts

Hedda Gabler

The Lady from the Sea

The Link

Love and Geography

Love's Comedy

The Newly Married Couple

Rosmersholm

The Thunder Storm

When We Dead Awaken

Love and Truth as Basis Of Happiness

Bankruptcy

A Doll's House

Ghosts

Swanwhite

Stepmother

Advent

The Lady from the Sea

Swanwhite

Parents and Children

Bankruptcy

Beyond Our Power, I

Beyond Our Power, II

Easter

The Editor

The Father

The Gauntlet

The Link

Little Eyolf

Love and Geography

The New System

The Newly Married Couple

Sigurd Slembe

There are Crimes and Crimes

The Thunder Storm

The Wild Duck

The Vikings at Helgeland

Dominance of One Over Others in the Home

A Doll's House

The Lady from the Sea

The League of Youth

Compromise of Truth

The Wild Duck

The Gauntlet

Concealment of Truth

A Doll's House

Ghosts

Tyranny of the Past

Ghosts

The Master Builder

Rosmersholm

Slavery to Public Opinion

Bankruptcy

An Enemy of the People

Ghosts

The Master Builder

Pillars of Society

VI. The Individual.

Self-Reliance

Brand

An Enemy of the People

Rosmersholm

The Pretenders

Craving for Freedom or Adventure

Hedda Gabler

The Lady from the Sea

Lucky Pehr

The New System

Peer Gynt

Sigurd Slembe

When We Dead Awaken

Lack of Responsibility

A Doll's House

The Lady from the Sea

The League of Youth

Little Eyolf

The Master Builder

Isolation---Mental and Physical

Easter

An Enemy of the People

Ghosts

Hedda Gabler

The Thunder Storm

Suicide

Hedda Gabler

Suicide (continued)

Rosmersholm

The Wild Duck

Fear---Morbidity

Advent

A Doll's House

The Father

Hedda Gabler

Little Eyolf

The Master Builder

Doubt---Self-Torture

Little Eyolf

The Master Builder

Rosmersholm

Inherited Evils

Brand

The Father

Ghosts

Hedda Gabler

Miss Juliet

Egotism

John Gabriel Borkman

Unselfishness---Sacrifice

Easter

Hedda Gabler

John Gabriel Borkman

Little Eyolf

Pillars of Society

Leonarda

When We Dead Awaken

Gentleness---Kindness

Brand

Beyond Our Power, I

Beyond Our Power, II

The Editor

The King

The Pretenders

The Vikings at Helgeland

Dissipation---Drunkenness

The Editor

The Gauntlet

Ghosts

Hedda Gabler

Revenge---Jealousy

Creditors

Debit and Credit

The Father

Hedda Gabler

The Link

Little Eyolf

The Stronger

There are Crimes and Crimes

The Vikings at Helgeland

Moral Benefit of Confession

Advent

The New System

Pillars of Society

Rosmersholm

The Wild Duck

When We Dead Awaken

Falsity

Bankruptcy

A Doll's House

The Gauntlet

Hedda Gabler

The New System

Falsity (continued)

Pillars of Society

The Wild Duck

The Vampire Woman

The Father

Laboremus

The Link

The Stronger

There are Crimes and Crimes

The Vikings at Helgeland

Chronological List of the Dramas.

1850

Catilina (I)

The Warrior's Barrow (I)

1851

Norma; or a Politician's Love (I)

1853

St. John's Night (I)

1856

Between the Battles (B)

The Feast at Solhaug (I)

1857

Lady Inger of Östraat (I)

Olaf Liljekrans (I)

1858

Lame Hulda (B)

The Vikings at Helgeland (I)

1861

King Sverre (B)

1862

Love's Comedy (I)

Sigurd Slembe (B)

1864

Mary Stuart in Scotland (B)

The Pretenders (I)

1865

The Newly Married Couple (B)

1866

Brand (I)

1867

Peer Gynt (I)

1869

Hermione (S)

The League of Youth (I)

1871

The Outlaw (S)

1872

Master Olof (S)

Sigurd Slembe (B)

1873

Emperor and Galilean (I)

1874

Bankruptcy (B)

The Editor (B)

1877

The King (B)

Pillars of Society (I)

1879

A Doll's House (I)

Leonarda (B)

The New System (B)

1880

1880

The Secret of the Guild (S)

1881

Ghosts (I)

1882

An Enemy of the People (I)

Sir Bengt's Lady (S)

1883

Beyond Our Power, I (B)

A Gauntlet (B)

The Wanderings of Lucky Pehr (S)

1884

The Wild Duck (I)

1885

Love and Geography (B)

1886

Rosmersholm (I)

1887

The Father (S)

1888

Comrades (S)

Miss Juliet (S)

The Lady from the Sea (I)

1890

Creditors (S)

Hedda Gabler (I)

Pariah (S)

Simoon (S)

The Stronger (S)

1892

The Keys of Heaven (S)

The Master Builder (I)

1893

Debit and Credit (S)

Facing Death (S)

The First Warning (S)

Mother-Love (S)

1894

Little Eyolf (I)

1895

Beyond Our Power, II (B)

1896

John Gabriel Borkman (I)

1897

The Link (S)

Playing with Fire (S)

1898

Paul Lange and Tora Parsberg (B)

To Damascus, I and II (S)

1899

Advent (S)

Eric XIV (S)

Gustavus Vasa (S)

The Saga of the Folkungs (S)

There are Crimes and Crimes (S)

When We Dead Awaken (I)

1900

Gustavus Adolphus (S)

1901

Charles XII (S)

The Dance of Death, I and II (S)

Easter (S)

Engelbreckt (S)

Laboremus (B)

Midsummer (S)

1902

At Storhove (B)

The Crown Bride (S)

The Dream Play (S)

Swanwhite (S)

1903

Gustavus III (S)

The Nightingale of Wittenberg (S)

Queen Christina (S)

1904

Daglannet (B)

To Damascus, III (S)

1907

After the Fire (S)

The Pelican (S)

The Spook Sonata (S)

The Thunder Storm (S)

1908

The Last Knight (S)

The Slippers of Abu Casem (S)

1909

The Black Glove (S)

The Earl of Bjällbo (S)

The Great Highway (S)

The National Director (S)

When the New Wine Blooms (B)

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